
Los Alamos physicist Hockaday honored for national security contributions

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Associate

Director for Experimental Physical Sciences Mary Hockaday of Los Alamos National Laboratory is the recipient of two significant honors this week. She earned a 2014 fellowship from the Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and also a Distinguished Alumni Award from the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Alumni Association.

“I have been truly surprised, humbled and honored by these awards; I greatly appreciate the folks who took to undertake my nominations,” Hockaday said.

Hockaday’s AAAS recognition comes for “exemplary leadership at Los Alamos National Laboratory in support of the nation’s nuclear security and in realizing the technologies to foster that security,” according to the AAAS awards committee site.

The accomplishments of the new Fellows will be celebrated at the 2015 AAAS Annual Meeting, convening this year under the theme “Innovations, Information, and Imaging.” At the Annual Meeting, the new Fellows will be presented with an official certificate and a gold and blue (representing science and engineering, respectively) rosette pin on Saturday, February 14 at the AAAS Fellows Forum in San Jose, California.

Election as a Fellow of AAAS is an honor bestowed upon members by their peers. Fellows are recognized for meritorious efforts to advance science or its applications.

NMSU recognition

Separately, Hockaday, who earned her master of science and doctorate in physics from New Mexico State University (NMSU), was recognized in the College of Arts and Sciences. The New Mexico State University award is presented to accomplished alumni selected on the basis of personal accomplishment, professional achievement, and charitable service. The award ceremony was part of the university’s recent Homecoming festivities.

In her presentation, “Adventures in Physics,” delivered at a Department of Physics colloquium in her honor, Hockaday described her path from NMSU student to Laboratory leader—one she said required “jungle gym” prowess in adapting to challenging circumstances. In accepting the award, she thanked her nominators and the university, noting the essential role education and supportive mentors have played in her successful career.

About Hockaday

Hockaday serves on the NMSU’s Advisory Board for the Department of Physics, manages the Los Alamos Neutron Science Center (LANSCE), which oversees subcontracts with the NMSU physics department, and has helped secure logistical support for the LANSCE School on Neutron Scattering, which is funded through an NMSU-based grant from the National Science Foundation.

Hockaday joined Los Alamos National Laboratory in 1986 in the Fast Transient Plasma group as its only female experimentalist fielding and developing x-ray diagnostics for underground nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site (NTS). As nuclear testing slowed, she turned her focus to applications of high-powered lasers and pulse power.

From 2002 to 2004, Hockaday led the 500-person Dynamic Experimentation Division, an organization engaged in the research and application of high explosives. In 2006, she was named Deputy Associate Director of Weapons Physics and Program Director for Science and Inertial Confinement Fusion and High Yield (ICF) Campaigns.

Hockaday, who earned her bachelor of science degree in physics, with distinction, from the University of Hawaii, is a member of the American Physical Committee on the Status of Women in Physics and has served on numerous review panels, including those for the Department of Energy, Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico State University and Cornell University.

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